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ABSTRACT

A renewed call from national and state governments to strengthen connections between public schools and their communities invites people outside of the school system to play an active role in the decision-making process. Despite recent efforts to connect public schools and their communities, the two parties remain disconnected. This paper reflects on the historical literature on the development of public education from the 19th century to the present to understand the roots of this persistent disconnection. The first section establishes the initial connections between the public schools and their communities. These initial consensual connections, justified by public school crusaders, were fueled and supported by both public school representatives and their communities. The second section shows that the last two centuries witnessed the fracturing of the religious, political, and economic arguments for connection. It is suggested that diversity has been the source of disconnection and that the historical intensity and depth of disconnection must be addressed if future reform efforts are to build bridges. The paper concludes that historical forces surrounding diversity have institutionalized the disconnection between public schools and their communities. Any reform effort must not only address the institutional characteristics of schools, but also closely examine the historical forces that affect the formal and informal relationships between schools and society. Reform efforts can utilize diversity in a positive way to reduce the separation. (Contains 51 references.) (Author/LMI)

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THE LEGACY OF DISCONNECTION BETWEEN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THEIR CONSTITUENTS

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RUNNING HEAD: Legacy of Disconnection

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Abstract

A renewed call from national and state governments to strengthen connections between public schools and their communities invites people outside of the school system to play an active role in decision-making processes. Despite recent efforts to connect public schools and their communities, the two parties remain disconnected. Given this disconnection, it is instructive to ask what practices, past and present, have supported or perpetuated it. The intent of this paper is to reflect on the historical literature on the development of public education from the nineteenth century to the present for the purpose of illuminating the roots of this persistent disconnection. The first section of the paper establishes the initial connections between the public schools and their communities. These initial consensual connections, justified by public school crusaders, were fueled and supported by both public school representatives and their communities. Against this backdrop of consensus, the second section of the paper shows that the last two centuries have witnessed the fracturing of the religious, political and economic arguments for connection. In examining the fracturing of these connections -- all of which have nearly dissolved -- the paper suggests that the historical intensity and depth of disconnection must be addressed if future reform efforts are to build bridges. The paper concludes with the beliefs that historical forces surrounding diversity have "institutionalized" the disconnection between public schools and their communities and that any effort for reconnection requires a completely new perspective.

THE LEGACY OF DISCONNECTION BETWEEN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

> When we are ill and seek help through therapy, we have to know where we have been and what has happened to us, in order to gain a clearer picture of what we might become. Similarly, social malaise makes it necessary to reflect on history as a means to self-understanding (Wirth, 1972, p. 4).

> The school is a closed system of social interaction . . . . The school is in fact clearly differentiated from its social milieu (Waller, 1932, p. 6).

Both at the federal and state levels of government, calls have been made to strengthen connections between public schools and their communities.[1] To this end, highly-publicized proposed reforms include increased consumer choice, school-home partnerships, parental involvement in school governance, school-to-work programs, and community outreach services (Astuto & Clark, 1992; Capper, 1994). These reforms require alterations in school-community relationships. Once regarded simply as supporters, community members are now asked by our national and state governments and local school districts to participate actively in site-based policy making, planning, and instructional improvement. In turn, schools are asked to recognize and respect local cultural traditions in their decision-making in the face of a new wave of immigration and increased mobility from community to community (Crowson, 1992). These and other proposed reforms seriously challenge accepted assumptions about educational institutions and their local environments.

Ironically, despite myriad efforts to connect public schools and their communities, the two parties remain disconnected (Cohn, 1992; Crowson, 1992; Little, 1992; Louis, 1992; Lutz & Merz, 1992). In part, this disconnection reflects discrepancies the disparity

in parents' and educators' goals. According to Cattermole and Robinson (1985), most parents believe that involvement is the best way to communicate with schools, and want closer interaction with the schools than that offered by the common public relations programs educators use. While educators do not oppose increased interaction, they feel a strong need to protect their status as credentialed professionals. In large part, the requirements for this credentialing are what position educators as "experts," making it difficult for them to accept their communities' opinions or positions as legitimate.

Besides these obstacles, administrators face other challenges in seeking to strengthen relationships between schools and their communities. These include: 1) conflicting desires for cooperation and independence on the part of parents and professionals; 2) a mandate for schools to be responsive to parents while seeking to change the parents' behaviors (Crowson, 1992, p. 2); 3) the goal of "opening" schools to their communities without changing a school system that insists on barriers because of the mythical separation of schools and politics (Iannaconne, 1989; Lutz & Merz, 1992; Moen, 1978); and, 4) the requirement that teachers move from isolation and autonomy to cooperation and outreach within an institution that supports the former (Boyd & Crowson, 1981; Boyd & Hartman, 1988; Boyd, 1991; Cohn, 1992; Crowson & Boyd, 1995; Little, 1992; Louis, 1992). For these and other reasons, many assert that schools are "intractable" institutions (Sarason, 1971, 1990) with multiple barriers separating them from their communities.

What practices, past and present, have supported or perpetuated this current state of disconnection? In the present discussion I shall seek the roots of this disconnection by reflecting on the development of public education from the nineteenth century to the present. I shall consider the proposition that future reform efforts can succeed only if the historical intensity and depth of disconnection are addressed. The discussion draws heavily on the work of Frederick Eby (1957), David Tyack (1967a, 1967b, 1972a, 1972b, 1993, 1995), and David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot (1982).[2]

Remembering his professor, Benard Bailyn, at Harvard, Carl Kaestle (1973) recalled being taught that "the basic task of any historian is to explain how we got from 'A' to 'B'" (p. vii). I shall attempt to do just that -- to describe how schools and their communities gradually moved from connection to disconnection. Focusing on this process will provide a new perspective on more comprehensive and general historical accounts of the development of America's public school system. A focus on this process of disconnection, lacking in the existing literature, is important to anyone involved in the current reform efforts to strengthen the links between the public schools and their communities.

The first part of the paper establishes the initial linkages between public schools and their communities in this country. An intertwining of religious, political and economic attitudes served as a basis of consensus which has since vanished. These consensual connections, justified by public school crusaders, supported with religious, political, and economic arguments that promised something for everyone. The underlying ideal was that schools are a common good. These arguments were widely regarded as reflecting the majority view among public school representatives and the broader public, and served as the basis for unity, consensus, and connection.

Against this backdrop of consensus, the second part of this paper shows that in the last two centuries these three strands of unifying arguments have been fractured. Although religion, politics, and economics were unified in the rhetoric advocating public schools, I will discuss each separately because as they became disconnected from public schools, they separated. In discussing the religious argument, which expressed the views of most religious groups, I shall address the close ties between religion and schools in the early 1800s and trace their eventual dissolution. The section on the commonly accepted political argument will explore several popular nineteenth century beliefs: the republican form of government was superior to all others, it could survive only if citizens were educated properly, and the survival of the United States as a nation entrusted with a millennial

destiny was of paramount importance. I shall then turn to the movement to separate politics from education, which resulted in another disconnection.

The section on the economic argument will consider the rhetoric of education crusaders, who sought to convince the nation that schools should be free and public institutions responsible for the schooling of all children. They pointed to the economic well-being of the nation as the justification for common schools. In particular, Horace Mann told employers that educated workers were more industrious, obedient, and adaptive, thus producing greater output; to workers he suggested that education would result in increased wages (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 55). I shall then follow the gradual shaping of schools after the industrial model (Callahan, 1962) in the early 1900s and the role of vocational/technical curriculum concerns during this period. Although the industrial model of schooling is largely still in place, the dissatisfaction business and industry feel with the current school system (Daggett, 1990; Wirth, 1972) indicates that even the connection between the economic sector and public schools is at best weak, and at worst severed.

Establishing Public Schools in a Redeemer Nation

Public schools were conceived by multiple parents, and arrived through a birthing process that was both erratic and lengthy. The birth was well-attended, for it promised to help all Americans realize the benefits of living in God's country. According to our national myths, it was God, after all, who brought the vast majority to America in the first place -- a God who not only tolerated religious freedom, but who also was to be fiercely and faithfully worshipped. In this cultural context, it is not surprising that religion was viewed as an essential component of public education throughout the nineteenth century. As Tyack and Hansot (1982, p. 31) observed:

> Many of the public school promoters of the mid-nineteenth century were convinced that America was literally God's country, the land He had chosen to bring about the redemption of mankind. The

> version of the millennialism they most commonly shared was . . . the gradual creation of the kingdom of God on earth and the triumph of Christian principles in government and society . . . . [T]he common-school crusaders regarded themselves as God's chosen agents.

With great fervor, determination, and conviction crusaders worked to establish public education. Enjoying cohesive support from a largely decentralized grass-roots social movement, more schooling was available for a greater number of people than in any other nation by the end of the nineteenth century. For the most part, educational practices including those connected to religion, were remarkably uniform in purpose, structure, and curriculum. The schools were viewed as a force for national unity, even though they were locally controlled by thousands upon thousands of separate communities (Cremin, 1951; Crowson, 1992; Kaestle, 1983; Tyack & Hansot, 1982; Vallance, 1973).

The rhetorical themes of this social movement were primarily based on Protestant-republican ideology with strong economic and political arguments as well. In "God's country," it was implied, strong believers should be properly educated political citizens, individually and collectively, enjoying the economic rewards appropriate for an educated God-centered citizenry (Kaestle, 1983). Tyack and Hansot (1982) reported that "[the crusaders] were confident that within the consensus vision of a providential universe there could be little incongruity among patriotism, godliness, and prosperity. . . . Many of the leaders in the common-school crusade were only part-time educational reformers, earning their livings as ministers, lawyers, farmers, businessmen, editors, politicians, and college presidents and professors. They were skilled rhetoricians who cast their arguments not in narrowly professional terms but in broadly persuasive language" (p. 21).

High geographic mobility facilitated rapid, comprehensive communication between like-minded groups and resulted in surprisingly similar schooling practices across the nation. Associations were formed to promote and share the latest pedagogical ideas and

political strategies. Benevolent societies -- such as the American Sunday School Union -- developed highly sophisticated methods of operation. The reformers linked religion, politics, and economics in their vision of a redeemer nation. The way reformers spoke of religion was to talk about God rather than a particular religious sect. Even missionaries directly connected with specific church movements were enthusiastic promoters of economic development. Wealth was viewed as an indication of God's grace and a political necessity to fulfill America's divine destiny. For example, George Atkinson, a Protestant minister in Oregon in the mid-nineteenth century and a great promoter of public schools, spoke to the New York City Chamber of Commerce, in 1888, about investment opportunities in the West. In fact, "[i]t was said of him that 'he spoke of commerce as a merchant might speak, of railroads like a corporation president, of resources like a capitalist' . . . . In him the Victorian trinity of entrepreneurial economic outlook, evangelical Protestantism, and Americanism found characteristic expression" (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 44).

One of the most important events in the development of the nineteenth-century common school was the appointment of Horace Mann to direct the public schools of Massachusetts in 1837. Using the art of persuasion, Mann sought to translate Americans' faith in education into support for a particular type of schooling: the public school (Bailyn, 1960; Eby, 1957). Along with other crusaders, he asserted that education "was to be free, financed by local and state government, controlled by a lay board of education, mixing all social groups under one roof, and offering education of such quality that no parent would desire private schooling" (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 30). Mann's genuine compassion for those marginalized by society was apparent in his appeals for urban workers (Curti, 1959; Tyack, 1967a). His address to the Massachusetts Board of Education on "The Duty of the Old Generation to the New" clearly ties the religious, political, and economic survival of the republic to free public schooling:

> In later times, and since the achievement of American Independence, the universal and ever-repeated argument in favor of Free Schools has been, that the general intelligence which they are capable of diffusing, and which can be imparted by no other human instrumentality, is indispensable to the continuance of a republican government. This argument, it is obvious, assumes, as a postulatum, the superiority of a republican over all other forms of government; and, as a people, we religiously believe in the soundness, both of the assumption and of the argument founded upon it. . . . Again; the expediency of Free Schools is sometimes advocated on grounds of Political Economy. An educated people is a more industrious and productive people. Knowledge and abundance sustain to each other the relation of cause and effect. Intelligence is a primary ingredient in the Wealth of Nations. . . . The moralist, too, takes up the argument of the economist. He demonstrates that vice and crime are not only prodigals and spendthrifts of their own, but defrauders and plunderers of the means of others . . . (Cohen, vol. 2, 1974, p. 1096-1097).

Mann's influence was profound, and in 1827 Massachusetts passed legislation that abolished rates and declared all schools free (Cubberly, 1948; Eby, 1957; Jackson, 1965), thus establishing the pattern for the other states in the Union. This non-partisan rhetoric supported proper education for republican citizens in schools created and run by their communities.

Eby (1957) wrote that "[t]he policy of supporting common schools by direct taxation upon all property for the education of all the children of the community involved the acceptance of a revolutionary philosophy of government" (p. 559). This "revolutionary philosophy of government" was not long in coming, however, as can be seen in *A*

Statement of the Theory of Education in the United States of America as Approved by Many Leading Educators (Washington, DC., 1874):

> The idea of the state and the idea of civil society--the former the idea of the actualization of justice and the latter that of the supply of human wants and necessities through the creation and distribution of wealth--conspire, by general consent, in the production of the American system of public education, and, to its maintenance and support, the property of the community is made to contribute by taxation. Both the preservation of property by the actualization of justice and the increase of property by productive industry are directly conditioned, in a republic, upon the educated intelligence of the people. . . . [I]t may be said that the modern industrial community cannot exist without free [emphasis added] popular education carried out in a system of schools ascending from the primary grade to the university. And without a free development of productive industry, enabling the individual to accumulate the wealth necessary for the supply of the necessities of life faster than he consumes them, there is not left the leisure requisite to that cultivation of intelligence needed in the theoretical discussion and comprehension of public affairs; and without such occupation of the individual with public affairs, a democracy could exist only in name (Cohen, vol. 3., 1974: 1903)

Free public schools had become the cornerstones of our democratic system. The taxation of all citizens who owned property, so that state and local governments could provide funds to support free education for all children, became a symbol of our popular commitment to a democratic society (see Boutwell, 1879; Kaestle, 1983; Jackson, 1965). These early schools also reflected in practice the common political values of individual local

communities. The initial phases of public schooling, therefore, quite naturally included the views of a wide range of people and was perhaps as close to a democratic initiative as any this country has ever seen. Schools were seen as being "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

Thus, three major historical arguments (religion, politics, and economics) justifying public schools to their communities were established in the rhetoric of crusaders from all segments of society. These arguments, connected by the ideal of schools as a common good, formed a fundamental vision to which the unity of the educational system was tied. Each of these initially unifying ties has been severely damaged or fractured over time.

Fracturing Consensual Connections

The Fracturing of the God Connection

The establishment of schools under the direction of the Protestant churches was generally accepted. In the early nineteenth century, opposition to this general acceptance came from Catholic and Jewish immigrants, who believed that the pan-Protestant teachings in the schools were inappropriate for their children. They were particularly opposed to the public schools' attempts to mold all children into one homogenous religious type (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Catholics, in particular, felt strongly enough to provide private schools for their parishioners' children even though tax-supported, government-operated free public schools were available.

As Tyack and Hansot (1982) wrote, "The campaign to enforce a pan-Protestant morality through the common school moved to the national level in the 1870s and 1880s and divided the Republican and Democratic parties . . . . Republicans favored homogenization while Democrats embraced a tolerance for cultural differences " (pp. 76 and 81).[3] In an effort to end the controversy, some localities eliminated all religious teaching from their schools.

The controversy over religion in the schools was somewhat minimized by crusaders such as Horace Mann, whose discourse in support of public schooling reflected, in addition to other things, a secular position -- that education would eliminate delinquency and crime. As Eby (1957, p. 560) noted, Mann ". . . held the belief that the greatness of the common school lay in its power to prevent children from becoming criminals, which was far better than trying to reform them after they had fallen. This argument was used in all the states."

Although the teaching of religion was still important, at least covertly, its explicit practice was not obvious to the outsider. The nature of the religious agenda is reflected in the evaluation of public schools written by Englishman Francis Adams in 1875:

> Hitherto the work of American educationists has <u>not</u> [my emphasis], except in some of the large cities, been greatly obstructed by a "religious difficulty." The first aim of the schools has been to provide a good secular education, leaving religious instruction mainly to the Churches and the Sunday schools. The schools have generally been opened by some short religious exercise--the reading of the Bible, prayer, or singing of a hymn. A very large measure of success has attended this practice . . . . But it does appear probable that the common school will, in time, be made purely secular (Adams, 1875; quoted in Hilleshein & Merrill, 1980, p. 341).

Leadership in American public education continued to change, and by the beginning of the twentieth century leaders were no longer part-time educational evangelists. Instead, they were professional managers for whom education was a lifetime career. They sought to reshape schools according to the principles of business efficiency and scientific expertise. However, to say that religion was not a part of their practice would be inaccurate for as late as 1920 superintendents were listing the weekly reading of religious literature as more important for their professional improvement than participation in professional

meetings (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). In fact, although public schools were not directly connected to churches the Christian/Protestant connection was certainly alive and well in practice. Religious teaching became covert, but was still valued and pursued. Vallance (1973) asserted that religious teaching, which had once been overt in the curriculum, became "hidden" around the turn of the century. For example, public school leaders still believed that individual conversion was important, but subordinated the rhetoric associated with conversion to a discussion of the importance of learning the curriculum. The use of the Bible and other materials was said to be necessary in order to work toward mastery of the three Rs (Cremin, 1980; Johnson, 1963; Kaestle, 1983; Tyack, 1967a; Vallance, 1973; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). In addition, "the forerunner of the NEA, the National Teachers Association, resolved in 1869 that 'the Bible should not only be studied, venerated, and honored as a classic for all ages, people, and languages . . . but devotionally read, and its precepts inculcated in the common schools of the land' " (quoted in Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 75). This quote reflects the gradual shift in the language employed to explain the use of the Bible in schools. Language that had referred to the Bible as sacred was replaced with secular language that labeled the Bible a classic.

While turn-of-the-century progressive leaders were more overtly secular than earlier crusaders, they sustained a vision of a millennial future. Their image of the millennium was fueled differently, however. Rather than bringing "God's country" into being, they were certain that when armed with the instruments of scientific progress, they would move society toward "ever nobler ends" (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 106). Thus, the rhetoric of reform was transferred first from the use of secular language for religious ideals, and later from "revivalist Protestant-republican ideology to the language of science and business efficiency" (p. 107). Three important contributors to this new scientific view which radically affected the basic conception of education were Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and Thomas Henry Huxley (Eby, 1957).

Accompanying and supporting the shift in the language of justification for public schools was the basic constitutional tenet separating church and state. This issue had not arisen earlier because most funding for schools originally came from churches and private local groups. As financial responsibility shifted from the private sector to the public, this separation became a topic of unending controversy. The Establishment Clause[4] in the First Amendment creates, in Thomas Jefferson's words, a "wall of separation between church and state" (Peterson, 1994). Though constitutionally separated, however, church and state were not enemies, as evidenced by tax exemptions, government oaths of office, the national anthem, and coins and currency.

For most of the twentieth century the constitutional principle of separation of church and state has been debated constantly in communities, legislatures, and courts of law. Two major educational issues have continued to generate controversy: 1) Does the constitutional principle of separation of church and state permit the use of public funds to aid religious schools? and 2) Does that principle permit the states to require, endorse, or promote religious instruction or observances in public schools (Bahmueller, 1991)?

While the present focus is not on the history of legislation concerning the separation of church and state, it is important to recognize the effect this amendment has had on the disconnection of religious groups from the public schools. For over 100 years, the courts have supported this principle. Although in the early 1990s it began to face new challenges as Supreme Court cases increased, practices even remotely suggestive of religious sentiment have been eliminated. Thus, perhaps the greatest single argument connecting schools and their communities -- education for religious purposes -- has all but disappeared.

The Fracturing of the Political Connection

The connection public schools had with political groups was much like that with the religious sector. The belief that the republican form of government was superior to all others was as widely and righteously held by communities as the belief that the "Protestant

God" was the only "real," and certainly the superior, god. As noted earlier, it was thought that democratic government could survive only if citizens were educated properly: the United States was, after all, a redeemer nation entrusted with a millennial destiny.

This political argument for schooling seemed to gather strength when the responsibility for funding of schools shifted to local and state governments. And although the originators of the federal government had not regarded education as one of its direct concerns, federal aid soon became part of the funding package for public schools. This first took the form of federally-owned land given to states for the promotion and building of schools. The Morril Act of 1862, which endowed agricultural and mechanical education, was followed by others until today a portion of the public school budget in every state relies not only heavily on state and local funds, but also in part on federal funds.

This new connection to the federal government was slightly strengthened when in 1867 Congress created the Department of Education through two congressional enactments. The first act "created it in 1867 as a separate department of the executive branch; the second, in 1868, downgraded it to a bureau under the secretary of Interior. Although only a bureau, the office -- through collecting and distributing information about new educational developments -- became the single most important source of educational information during the rest of the nineteenth century" (Hillesheim & Merrill, 1980, p. 334). Still, fears of centralization on the part of individual states, combined with the political and administrative weakness of the first commissioner, made the Bureau of Education relatively weak (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 102).

Public schools were further politicized when the contest over "whose" religion should be central in the schools shifted into the political arena: Republicans favored homogenization and Democrats endorsed tolerance for cultural differences. Those who sought a pan-Protestant morality in schools began to lose faith in the grass-roots approach to problem-solving, and turned to federal and state governments to enforce their vision of "God's country." They felt that the problems of immigration, industrialization, and the

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rebuilding of the South were too large in scope for local volunteers to handle. Thus, there was a vigorous national movement toward centralization, and by the late nineteenth century the pattern was established (Cremin, 1980; Kaestle, 1983; Katz, 1971; Schrag, 1967; Tyack, 1967b; Tyack 1972b). Reform efforts driven by charismatic persuasion were giving way to government coercion (Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

While the connection between public schools and local, state, and federal governments appeared to strengthen, even more powerful forces were affecting the public school system and its leaders. Industrialization and organizational revolution at the end of the nineteenth century dramatically altered the outlook and practices of these leaders. As mentioned earlier, by "the turn of the twentieth century leadership in American public education had gravitated from the part-time educational evangelists who had created the common-school system to a new breed of professional managers who made education a lifelong career and who were reshaping the schools according to canons of business efficiency and scientific expertise . . . . Instead of trying to mobilize local citizens to act, the twentieth century managers sought to 'take schools out of politics' and to shift decision making upward and inward in hierarchical systems of management" (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 107). Professional management, many thought, would eliminate excessive lay meddling with the proper business of professionals, reduce the numerous opportunities for patronage and corruption, and expand the limited scope for decision-making afforded to educational experts (Cronin, 1973; Quinlivan, 1939).

These lifelong career professional educators/managers differed from the crusaders of the mid-nineteenth century in the central challenge they faced. The crusaders had sought to mobilize support for education in order to construct an educational system. In contrast, turn-of-the-century progressives worked as experts to redesign public education rather than create it, and to constrain public participation rather than solicit it. Made legitimate by their new "expert knowledge" (certified by specialized training -- see Clubberly, 1909; belonging to exclusive professional associations -- AASA), they sought to control human

evolution scientifically with their version of improved education. By shaping "their proffered policies into standard templates of reform which they applied to state after state, district after district, in their school surveys and legislative proposals, they successfully changed the structures of decision-making and sought to turn political issues into matters of administrative decision, confident that schools could rise 'above politics' " (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 7).

Policy elites believed that once an "apolitical" corporate model of governance was in place, professionals would be able to bring about systemic reform. By using backward "mapping" from adult tasks and duties, professionals could build curriculum "scientifically," providing the knowledge and skills students would need in adult life (Tyack, 1995). All of this, it was believed, would accompany the depoliticization of schools. Schools had once been explicitly viewed as part of the national political agenda, educating citizens properly so that the "superior republican form of government" could survive. Ultimately, schools became disconnected from politics and from the groups advancing a political agenda so that there would be room for educational experts and reform.

The Fracturing of the Economic Connection

Although closely linked to political arguments, the economic justification for the establishment of common schools has some distinct characteristics. Language reflecting this argument varied. As noted earlier, Horace Mann promised employers and employees -- people connected to business and industry -- that their businesses and lives would improve when public schools were established (Kaestle & Vinovskis, 1980). For the crusaders, patriotism, religious practice, and prosperity were all parts of the same vision of the redeemer nation whose property values were increased by the building of schools.

Unlike the God connection, whose strength was perhaps greatest in the early stages of public schooling and subsequently waned until it became only a covert element in the system, the economic connection gained strength steadily. By the turn of the century most

public school rhetoric reflected the nation's industrialization. The concept of reordering human interaction to maximize efficiency -- connecting people by occupation rather than faith -- gradually emerged. Higham (1974), who referred to this as technical unity, suggested that this new way of interacting changed most aspects of life by conceptualizing human relationships much like the working of machines.

This redefinition of human interaction, for example, led to changes in decision-making structures that were perhaps most obvious in urban education, where professional managers aligned with elite business and professional groups to eliminate the lay management of schools, replacing it with the new corporate model of decision making. As in the corporate model, schools were run by small central school boards elected at large from the city. These boards were composed of "successful men" who acted as policy makers and delegated practical management of the schools to trained superintendents (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 107). This governance model often blocked the political channels that had been available to the cities' working-class and ethnic communities, further enhancing the power of the elites (Cronin, 1973; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Thus, the turn of the century witnessed growth of corporate power, government regulation, and the application of a mechanical model to the production of work (Callahan, 1962; Kaestle, 1983; Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

The rhetoric supporting the tie between schools and business strengthened. As Tyack (1995, p. 16) noted, for example,

> "Columbia [University] president Nicholas Murray Butler told Chicago businessmen that he should 'as soon think of the democratization of the treatment of appendicitis' as to speak of 'the democratization of schools.' Schools should be run like businesses. The small board should select a good manager and delegate the running of the district to him. 'There is but one best way' of running schools, said a president of a school board, and this system should

> be adopted everywhere. This business paradigm became know as the corporate model. Civic elites--the very people who today often want to 'restructure' centralized bureaucracies or to create choice through the market model of schooling--joined educational leaders in creating centralized control of specialized large bureaucracies."

This economic ideology continued to spread throughout the national consciousness. "Business methods" and "efficiency" became associated with progress and reform. This association advanced in newspapers, journals, and books; in speeches at educational meetings; and, more directly, in actions of school boards. Its influence was exercised in the form of suggestions or demands that the schools be organized and operated in a more businesslike way and that more emphasis be placed on a practical and immediately useful education (Callahan, 1967, p. 5).

The effect of this move toward efficiency and economy, called "Scientific Management" (see Taylor, 1911), was broad and deep. The purposes of "Scientific Management" were: 1) to increase the efficiency of the laborer, i.e., the pupil; 2) to increase the quality of the product, i.e., the pupil; and, 3) thereby to increase the amount of output and the value to the capitalist (Callahan, 1967, p. 8). Changes were made in everything from curriculum to the nature of teachers' required instructional skills.

Callahan (1967) offered one of the strongest examples of this movement . In 1909, the Superintendent of the Illinois Farmer's Institute, speaking before the National Education Association, stated:

> Ordinarily a love of learning is praiseworthy; but when this delight in the pleasure of learning become so intense and so absorbing that it diminishes the desire, and the power of earning, it is positively harmful. Education that does not promote the desire and power to do useful things -- that's earning -- is not worth the getting. Education that stimulates a love for useful activity is not simply

> desirable; it is in the highest degree ethical . . . . Personally I would rather send out pupils who are lop-sided and useful, than those who are seemingly symmetrical and useless. A man without a vocation is more to be pitied than "the man without a country." . . . And the country of which he is an inhabitant is to be commiserated, too (p. 10).

The key to understanding how public schools became disconnected from economics is that the connection business and industry envisioned never really occurred even though the desire for such a linkage has been perhaps the strongest of the three original strands. In fact, it was at the turn of the century, during a period of economic growth, that the vocational technical/humanities debate over curriculum and education programs emerged in earnest. This ongoing debate is far beyond the scope of this paper, but some regard it as the main reason why business and industry remain largely disconnected from the public school system today.

Many speculative explanations have been offered for this disconnection. To provide a sense of their nature, although not their range, I shall cite one example. Wirth (1972) proposed three reasons for disconnection: 1) the ideals held by Americans with respect to the value of education; 2) the philosophical positioning of labor unions; and, 3) the positioning of public school professionals.

A vivid illustration of Wirth's first reason is found in the story of Calvin M. Woodward, who designed a school for future leaders of industry in 1887. Woodward was a critic of classical education and a champion of science and technical studies. In establishing his school, "Woodward studied efforts of various European countries where more practical education programs were being developed as alternatives to traditional literary-oriented schooling. Prussia, Belgium, and France, he observed, were establishing industrial schools for children of laborers and factory operatives which centered on specialized training in skills such as engraving, coloring, dyeing, lace-making, weaving,

and glasswork. This arrangement, said Woodward, was suited to the European social system, wherein the lives of workingmen were destined 'to run smoothly in grooves cut for them before they were born.' The situation was quite different in American society. Woodward held, because, 'with us every boy is a natural candidate for the office of president, and no one shall dare to place any bounds to his aspirations and his social possibilities'" (Wirth, 1972, p.13). In other words, Woodward viewed an alternative education, one more directly focused on vocation, as contrary to the American dream that anything was possible if a child had a good education. The fear that this dream would be threatened held business and industry at arm's length from the public schools.

Wirth's other two reasons for this continuing disconnection are directly related to the first, but more narrowly focused. The second, that labor unions were philosophically opposed, took shape as unions began to form. Even in this era of business hegemony, the nation's faith that what was good for business was good for America was not universally accepted. In particular, around the turn of the century the American Federation of Labor felt seriously threatened by the National Association of Manufacturers' recommendations for the modification of the school system. Organized labor soon realized that an education that trained children for a limited future would ultimately produce distinct class divisions, with the worker at the bottom. The worker linked economic inequality with political inequality, and hated both (Wirth, 1972, p. 44).

> We are fast approaching those extremes of wealth and extravagance on the one hand, and ignorance, poverty, and wretchedness on the other, which will eventually terminate in those unnatural and oppressive distinctions which exist in the corrupt governments of the old world (Commons, quoted in Wirth, 1972, p. 44).

Americans of many political persuasions had long been suspicious of what they viewed to be privileged private associations with access to political power. "The whole

issue of 'private power' has often seemed conspiratorial and nefarious" (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 129).

The third reason Wirth offered, the philosophical and practical concerns of educators, is closely aligned with the second. Educators argued that the purpose of the American revolution had been to break "from the class-oriented traditions of societies across the Atlantic, [and] they were suspicious of the manufacturers' call to return to the European educational pattern [the one argued for by Woodward]" (Wirth, 1972, p. 26). At a practical level, administrators believed their jobs would be threatened if the German model was adopted because German vocational schools were administered separately. Administrators viewed this separation as a diversion of power and money, which at the time went only to the public schools. Like administrators, who by then viewed themselves as experts, teachers were also reluctant to accept guidance or direction from business, which they believed lacked appropriate training and knowledge. Admittedly, they faced potential threats to their jobs when skills not normally taught in the public schools were discussed as necessary for children; these concerns are reflected today in educators' claims to professional status. While admitting that professional standards in education are far from those standards met by physicians, educators insist that their professional knowledge of instructional methods, pupil grouping, choice and sequencing of learning materials, and evaluations of student progress are critically important (Crowson, 1992, p. 14). Allowing anyone outside the professional circle to make such decisions undermines the status of trained credentialed teachers and administrators.

Although the examples cited above are limited in breadth and depth, my intent is to show that the debate over the connection between the economic sector and the public schools continues.[5] Newspapers, especially in the past two decades, have documented much discontent on the part of business and industry regarding the lack of training and education appropriate for the workforce, and the business sector's belief that our public schools are responsible for America's failure in international economic competition. Study

after study has been done to assess needs and propose solutions. Yet, the schools remain separate and disconnected.

Bridging the Distance Between Public Schools and their Communities

I began this article suggesting that although histories of our public school system are varied and comprehensive, there has been little explicit focus on the evolution of the current disconnection between public schools and their communities. I initially argued that the distance between the two is broad and deep: Like a river running between two shorelines, this gap has a nature and life of its own. I then established the initial consensual connections -- based on religious, political, economic arguments -- between the public schools and their communities as a starting point for discussing the development of this gap. Against this backdrop of connection, I showed that in the last two centuries these three main unifying arguments have fractured leaving our schools basically disconnected from their publics.

When focused on this disconnection, current literature on school reform reflects the concerns of educators. Reform proposals based on substantial involvement of those outside the public school system range from consumer choice to site-based management to service integration. Yet although well-implemented reform can effectively and indirectly change an institution (Odden & Marsh, 1989), other evidence shows that reform models are often defeated by the many "intractablilities" of public sector institutions (Sarason, 1971, 1990). A movement, described as "new institutionalism," in the theoretical and research literature on public sector behavior (Moe, 1984; Wilson, 1989; cited in Crowson & Boyd, 1995) asks two central questions: "Why do institutions respond poorly to reform? What can be done to improve the track record of institutional change" (Crowson & Boyd, 1995, p. 122)?

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This literature, while helpful, does not go far enough. It focuses heavily on the nature of institutions and less on their historical development. And, while I agree that institutions resist change for many reasons, I propose that the normative practices of today's school systems were firmly established by external historical processes. In my judgment, any reform effort must not only address the institutional characteristics of schools, but must also closely examine the historical forces that restrict, limit, govern, and guide the formal and informal relationships between schools and society. Further, I believe that a closer look would reveal that these historical forces have, over time, "institutionalized" the disconnection between public schools and their communities. Indeed, this "institutionalized" gap may serve a purpose not yet discerned or described in the literature. Scrutiny would draw attention to the substance of the disconnection itself. We must remember that before engineering a bridge intended to span a river, we must first study the river to determine the size, shape, and design of the bridge. In short, as we work to bridge the gap -- the "river of disconnection" -- between public schools and their communities, we must first study the gap itself.

My suggestion that the disconnection is itself "institutionalized" and worthy of further research does not address the primary goal of such research. That is, we are still left with the question: How can the public schools and their communities be reconnected?

I realize that as an isolated task, studying the gap will not yield a plan for the desired reconnection. Therefore, I advance a focus for further study that may be critical for the reconnection of schools and their communities. To begin, I believe that the brief historical review in this paper reveals that diversity has been a source of disconnection rather than connection. I found support in the literature for this idea.

For example, Sarason (1971 and 1982) reminded us that throughout history conflicts produced by differences in religion, race, and ethnicity have inevitably occurred at the site of schools and are primary reasons for disconnection. Sarason stated:

> It is a cliché to say that we are a nation of immigrants, but it is not a cliché to say that few people realize how the pluralism of our society has made schools frequent scenes of ideological battle. The 1954 desegregation decision, the fights in the sixties about "community control of schools," the acrimony that suffuses discussion of how to handle bilingualism, similar acrimony in regard to bias (racial ethnic, religious, and sexual) in textbooks, and the ever recurring controversy about "prayer in schools" -- these are the more recent versions of an old story, the central themes of which have been and still are: What are schools for? Who owns the schools? How do we change schools? The good old days were no better than the bad new days! . . . . A lack of social-historical perspective is one of the major obstacles to a balanced understanding of the culture of the school and the problem of change (p. 24).

In addition, Paula Fass (1989, cited in Tyack, 1993) agreed with Sarason: "The shape of American education in the twentieth century . . . is crucially related to the problems associated with American diversity" (p. 14).

In light of the belief that diversity has created disconnection between the public schools and their communities, I propose that we turn our thinking around and use diversity in a positive way to help solve the disconnection. Again, using the literature, let me explain what I mean.

First, I use "in a positive way" in the spirit of John Dewey (1916, cited in Tyack, 1993) who asserted that schools can become a microcosm of a just future society -- one that needs constantly to be renegotiated. I also appreciate the ideas of David Tyack (1993): "Students need to learn to criticize and erode the cultural constructions of difference that stratify people into unequal groups. To do this they need a rich understanding of what it means to be the other, a sense not only of the pleasures of knowing another's life but also

of the pain of discrimination. This kind of education requires moral courage and depth of intellectual probing that is too rarely found today. Public education falls far short if it takes a monocultural or timidly 'pluralistic' approach to preparing students for the multicultural society of the twenty-first century" (p. 29). I expand Tyack's statement to include all educators: administrators, teachers, and staff.

Second, I found Thomas Bender (1989) helpful. He reminded us that the study of public culture "embraces the wider, general subject of power, whether political, economic, social, or cultural, in public life" (p. 200). He argued that debate about power remains a productive part of our public culture, although it is built on a type of disconnection. Bender added that continuing debates between diverse groups for "legitimacy and justice" have created this public culture and established "our common life as a people and as a nation." It is essential to understand what has been excluded from this public culture as well as what it includes, and to ask "why have some groups and some values been so much -- or so little -- represented in public life and in mainstream culture and schooling at any given moment in out history" (p. 201)? "Understanding our peoplehood," he insists, "demands not an assumption of sameness but, rather, a relational sense of the differences that mark and make our society" (p. 201). I agree that defining disconnection as a continuing examination of relationships is a positive step. I would, however, rather define "connection" as a continuing examination *and valuing* of relationships, and give up the need to call it disconnection.

Keeping this definition of "connection" in mind, I submit that if "diversity," rather than "sameness," were envisioned as the common good serving the same unifying function, perhaps it could become at least a part of the desired connection between public schools and their communities.

The disconnection of schools and their communities has always existed. The rhetoric initially reflected connection and the promise of greater connection, but since schools are recognized sites of ideological battles, it appears that successful connections

will continue to be situational and episodic. From my perspective, as long as we ignore the possibility that diversity is at the core of disconnection, our reform efforts will remain superficial and ineffective. Does this mean that the dream of building a connection between schools and their communities is impossible? Not at all. I believe that we need to find new bases and reasons for connection; as suggested above, diversity could serve as a tool. In my judgment, the original reasons for the establishment of schools were strong enough to get the job done: free common schools were successfully established across the nation. However, these reasons were not intended to express connection overtly; rather, they assumed a connection between schools and their communities.

Americans believed the promises of the common school crusaders. They believed that the political, economic, and religious sectors could expect the schools not only to support their desired ends, but also to produce children conformed and educated to satisfy the expectations of our pluralistic society. This promise required common expectations and deep connection not only among the schools and their communities, but also among the various communities. This connection was never forthcoming. As we look more closely at disconnection, giving it the respect it demands, perhaps we can let go of our old reasons for connecting schools with their communities. Recasting these old reasons (as we have tried throughout history) has done little to address this persistent disconnection. We must seek completely new perspectives on this old problem -- perspectives that embrace and value the potential of a bridge designed and built from the materials of diversity.

Notes:

1. The use of the terms "community" and "communities" within the context of this paper are defined in the broadest possible sense. "Community" is meant to include all of American society, at the local, regional, and national levels. The term "community" is the umbrella for the three sectors of society discussed in the paper: the religious, the political, and the economic. At times I use the term "society" in

place of the word "community" just to give the reader a break. It is beyond the scope of this paper to enter the discussion of these two terms that is occurring in the social science literature (see Gusfield, 1975).

2. I have chosen to rely heavily on the works of Frederick Eby, David Tyack, and David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot because they provide a framework for analysis that has been widely accepted among historians and others. Because of their attention to the historical development of administrative roles in education, they have proved particularly useful for the examination of a topic -- the separation of public schools and their communities -- that currently preoccupies much of the literature on educational administration. Understanding that the perspectives of history represented in this paper are limited, the reader needs to be aware that the works of the revisionists and others would bring different views to this discussion.

3. See Tyack and Hansot (1982) for this fascinating story.

4. The Establishment Clause reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . . " (First Amendment, 1791).

5. This discussion is not only brief, but also limited in scope. The interpretation of the disconnection between schools and business by Wirth (1972) is only one of several and conflicts with some. See, for example, the works of Paul E. Peterson (1981) City Limits, and (1985) The Politics of School Reform.

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